

Kansas Claws Back, Takes Down UNC For Program's 5th Championship

Bill Sell had no choice but to light a fire into his Kansas Jayhawks team as they trailed North Carolina by 15 during halftime of the National Championship. What forth came was an inspiring a 47 point second half explosion - overcoming the greatest deficit in National Championship history to knock off the Tar Heels and win their program's 5th ever championship.

UNC's 16-3 run at the end of the first half gave the Tar Heels a convincing 15-point advantage at the break. Between Armando Bacot's interior dominance on a sprained ankle, Brady Manek's barrage of triples, and R.J Davis' poise, Carolina could sense their program's 7th national championship looming.

From the start of the 2nd half, you could tell the Jayhawks had different ideas. Kansas' Dajuan Harris' ball pressure of R.J Davis and Caleb Love forced Carolina into some bad offensive possessions early on, in which the Jayhawks took advantage of by pushing the pace in transition and attacking the hole.

Christian Braun was a pillar in that trend, as the junior guard used his power and pace in transition, as well as size advantage over Caleb Love, to score 10 of his 12 points in the second half. His burst was a large part in the Jayhawks's 16-5 run that cut their once large deficit to four in the blink of an eye.

Even after Kansas took a six point lead at the 10 minute mark, Carolina punched back back behind exemplary play from R.J Davis, who finished with 15 points, and fearless sophomore swingman Puff Johnson, who tallied 11 huge points and 6 rebounds off the bench.

The turning point came with under a minute to go, when Carolina's Armando Bacot made a spin move to try to get an angle on Kansas' David McCormack, but turned the ball over after his ankle gave out on him for a final time, with his team down by only a point. Bacot would exit for the remainder of the game.

No more than a possession later, with no Bacot on the floor, Kansas' David McCormack, who finished with 15 points and 10 rebounds, took advantage of a smaller Brady Manek in the post, scoring on a hook shot to raise his team's lead to three.

Carolina would get the last look with 4.3 seconds remaining, but a desperation three by All-tournament honoree Caleb Love would fall short, right along with the

Tar Heels title hopes.

The win gives Bill Self his 2nd National Championship, and the Jayhawks their first title in 14 years. A lot can be said about the all-around balance this Kansas team exhibited throughout winning the Big 12 regular and post-season championships, led by the NCAA Tournament's MOP Ochai Agbaji.

For North Carolina, it'll be a memorable year to look back on for first year head coach Hubert Davis and company. Not only did they shock Duke during Coach K's last home game at Cameron Indoor Stadium, but their improbable run to the final four is painted with upset wins over Baylor, UCLA, and Duke again. Armando Bacot etched his name into the big man history books, tying David Robinson's record for most double-doubles in a season with 31, while R.J Davis and Caleb Love each had coming out parties in March Madness that should carry over nicely into next season.